

Montgomery Regional Tourism Development Council

Meeting Minutes

November 16, 2017

I. Call to Order

Tom Norman called to order the regular meeting of the **MTDC** at **9:05 a.m.** on **August 23, 2017** in Multipurpose Room 2 in the Montgomery County Government Center.

II. Present

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Lisa Bleakley | Montgomery County Regional Tourism, Executive Director |
| Irene Kilmer | Montgomery County Regional Tourism, Visitor Relations Manager |
| Tom Norman (v) | Chair- Courtyard by Marriott, General Manager |
| Jason Dowdy (v) | Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, Milestone Development Partner |
| Sam Bishop (v) | Christiansburg Town Council- Primary |
| Randy Wingfield | Town of Christiansburg, Interim Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager |
| Ashish Malothra (v) | Blackstone Grill, General Manager |
| Jennifer Harris | Montgomery County, Public Information Director |
| Lea Wall (v) | Holiday Inn Christiansburg, Blacksburg, NRV Mall, Director of Sales |
| Heather Browning | Town of Blacksburg, Community Relations Manager |
| Diane Akers | The Blacksburg Partnership, Director |

Absent

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Marc Verniel | Town of Blacksburg, Town Manager |
| Craig Meadows | Montgomery County, County Administrator |
| Bryan Katz | Montgomery County Planning Commission Liaison |
| Gabe Minnich (nv) | Virginia Tech, University Relations Visitor Center |
| Melissa Powell | Town of Christiansburg, Public Relations Director |
| Harry Collins (v) | Christiansburg Town Council- Secondary |
| Connie Hale (v) | Vice Chair- Buffalo & More, Owner |
| Krishna Chachra (v) | Blacksburg Town Council |
| April DeMotts (v) | Montgomery County Board of Supervisors |

III. Approval of Minutes of August 24, 2017

Tom Norman makes a motion to approve the minutes from the August 24, 2017 meeting. Motion is seconded by Jason Dowdy. All said aye. Minutes approved

IV. Discussion

- Lisa Bleakley brings up that the tourism office has had requests to look at the Montgomery County VA Tourism Marketing Grant's status of being only available to 501-c3 non-profits. Lisa opens up the floor to discuss what the requirements should be to apply for the tourism grant.
 - The primary mission of the grant is not to sponsor an event, but to use the awarded dollars to market a new, or new addition of an event to potential visitors 50 miles or greater outside of Montgomery County.
 - Sam Bishop and Diane Akers agreed that they grant should only be open to non-profits.
 - Heather Browning agreed that the grant seems to be typical to keep open for only non-profits, but that the type of non-profit shouldn't matter.

- Tom Norman makes a motion for the Montgomery County VA Annual Tourism Marketing Grant to be amended to include all non-profits, not just 501-c3 non-profits. Sam Bishop seconds the motion. All say aye, none opposed.
- Lisa showed a quick clip of Governor McAuliffe's speech at the 2017 VA-1 Tourism Summit.
- Lisa shared highlights from the VA-1 Tourism Summit.
 - Video is still king
 - Everything is leaning towards digital to receive data
 - Personalized/customized experiences are becoming more popular for marketing and experiences
- Diane brings up the passenger rail and inquires how we can get rider to Montgomery County and make visitors aware of the train service available in Roanoke. The marketing committee wants to work with tourism to highlight this new way of transportation for the area.
- Lisa shares that at VA-1 a new grant has been created as part of a special campaign targeting millennials. The campaign is called Crush Friday and its purpose is to get the millennial work martyr to take a Friday off for an extended weekend somewhere in Virginia. This campaign stems from the campaign by the U.S. Travel Agency's Project: Time Off to get workers to use their leave before they lose it.
 - The Crush Friday grant does not require a match and can be incorporated into the DMO's already existing campaigns.
 - Lisa passes around a visitor profile to each table and tasks the groups to come up with a list of picture perfect moments.
 - Jennifer Harris and Tom Norman receive the millennial profile.
 - They came up with a #CrushScavengerHunt. Within the scavenger hunt the participants would need to visit so many breweries or wineries, etc. Participants would have to snap a photo of their experience and share on social media.
 - Heather Browning, Diane Akers, and Randy Wingfield receive the Snowbird profile.
 - Highlight pet friendly options. Have an itinerary on the website for pet friendly businesses in the area. Highlight pet care facilities so that visitors can go to the attractions and restaurants without worrying about their pet.
 - Ashish Malothra, Lea Wall, Sam Bishop, and Jason Dowdy receive the mid-lifers profile.
 - Look to helping those parents wanting to visit their kids.
- The attendees then give their updates about what's new in the county.
 - Tom Norman stated that Courtyard is Marriott's largest brand. In January Bistro 2.0 will open and the menu will be spiced up.
 - Randy Wingfield announced that the Town of Christiansburg is in the process of hiring a full-time special events coordinator. The new position will take on many duties to make the event application more streamlined. The Christiansburg Institute is working with Virginia Tech to revive the history of the building and area by working with Virginia Tech students. The Huckleberry Trail is continuing its expansion with a trail head by the Dairy Queen. The passenger rail is still on the table. The finance and structure are still under discussion. A visitor center would be a great idea to have around the train station around a few restaurants and coffee shops. Trying to figure out how to make Roanoke successful to measure the ridership of their new Amtrak platform. The county has bought around 120 acres of land by Falling Branch.
 - Diane Akers updated that they are working on their 2018 calendar. The 10th anniversary of Fork & Cork will be on April 21, 2018. The 10 year anniversary of Brew Do will be held on September 22, 2018. Lastly, the Farm to Table Cheese-fest will be held at Historic Smithfield Plantation on June 9, 2018.

- Heather Browning informed everyone that they are starting to receive event applications for 2018. An application that has come in as a draft is a Virginia Tech entrepreneur challenge that will be held Downtown. The event will be at the Lyric Theatre and will be like a mini South x Southwest. Might be small the first year, but has the potential to grow over the years. The town is in final negotiations about the bike share program. There will be various bike share spots around Blacksburg and Christiansburg.
- Ashish Malothra announced that they will be releasing their fall menu. The menu changes every season. Their Wine Dinner will be on December 10th.
- Lea Wall informs everyone that Kem's will be having a Thanksgiving feast from 11am-2pm. Make reservations to reserve a table. Kem's will also be open for Christmas.
- Jason Dowdy announces they are trying to renovate their Holiday Inn Express. A Wyndham is going up right across the street behind the Cracker Barrel.
- Bike America is returning to our area again. The tourism office will be looking for discounts on meals and information to pass along and offer to the participants to make them feel welcome. Will get hotels bullet list on facts and how hotels can tap into the event.
- Ashish asks if there is a packet for hotels to send to meeting organizers to share with their participants. The packet could be like a visual media kit of our area. It could be in digital form for the people planning the meeting to get information about our area out to our audience.

Adjournment

Tom Norman adjourned the meeting at 10:50 a.m.

Minutes submitted by: Lisa Bleakley

Minutes approved by: